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HIGH-LEVEL MEETING

Letter dated 4 May 1994 from the Permanent Representative of Malaysia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you the report of the first meeting of the Intergovernmental Working Group on Global Forests (see annex), which was held in Kuala Lumpur from 18 to 21 April 1994. The meeting was jointly organized and sponsored by the Governments of Canada and Malaysia.

The objective of the initiative undertaken by Canada and Malaysia is to facilitate dialogue and consolidate approaches to the management, conservation and sustainable development of the world's forests, leading to the review of forest-related issues by the Commission on Sustainable Development at its session in 1995. The second meeting of the Working Group is scheduled to be held in Canada in October 1994.

I would be grateful if you could make arrangements to circulate the attached report as an official document of the Commission on Sustainable Development under item 8 of the agenda for its second session.

(Signed) Razali ISMAIL
Ambassador

* E/CN.17/1994/1.

Annex

Report of First Meeting of the Intergovernmental Working Group on Global Forests Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 18-21 April, 1994

Forest issues have emerged as a priority on the international socio-economic, environment and trade agendas. The Non-legally binding authoritative statement of principles for a global consensus on the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests, commonly known as the Forest Principles, as well as Chapter 11 of Agenda 21 agreed to at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in June, 1992, together constitute the first international consensus on forests. The Forest Principles, therefore, serve as a useful basis for an international agenda on forests. Forests are also an important consideration in the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Framework Convention on Climate Change, as well as a number of other chapters of Agenda 21.

Following UNCED, it was agreed that the newly established United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) would review at its 1995 session the progress made in implementing forest related commitments made at UNCED. At the 14th Commonwealth Forestry Conference, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in September, 1993, Prime Minister Mahathir of Malaysia proposed the establishment of an intergovernmental working group on forests to facilitate the UNCSD review of forests in 1995. Subsequently, the Governments of Malaysia and Canada agreed to jointly sponsor such a working group. The first meeting of the Intergovernmental Working Group on Global Forests (IWGGF) was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, from 18-21 April, 1994.

Forest experts, technical and policy, from fifteen countries, three intergovernmental organizations and four non governmental organizations, participated in the first meeting of the IWGGF (Annex 1). They were drawn from all continents and reflected a wide range of socio-economic as well as ecological conditions.

Furthermore, many IWGGF participants have been, or are also, engaged in other international forest-related initiatives, such as the Global Forest Conference held in February, 1993 in Indonesia, the Forestry Forum for Developing Countries held in India in September, 1993, the Indo-U.K. forest initiative, the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe and its follow-up (Helsinki process) and the follow-up to the Seminar of Experts on the Sustainable Development of Temperate and Boreal Forests held under the auspices of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (Montreal process). The meeting also recognised the useful role to be played by international organisations in this regard.

At the outset of the meeting, it was stated that the IWGGF was not a negotiating forum, but rather an opportunity for some countries, intergovernmental organizations and non governmental organizations, actively involved in the global

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dialogue on forests, to discuss important forest issues with a view to promoting an effective review at the 1995 session of the UNCSD. The purpose of the IWGGF is not to dwell on the technicalities of forest issues, but to recognize, *inter alia*:

a) the inter-relationships among key forest issues;

b) the need for national action to be supported by international action; and

c) the need to streamline, coordinate and expedite follow-up action on the Forest Principles and Agenda 21.

Forests are important to the socio-economic and environmental well-being of both developing and developed countries. In formulating the agenda for the First meeting of the IWGGF the organizers recognized that the forest agenda is very broad and complex and, therefore, identified five items for discussion:

a) Forest Conservation, Enhancing Forest Cover and the Role of Forests in Meeting Basic Human Needs;

b) Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management;

c) Trade and Environment;

d) Approaches to Mobilizing Financial Resources and Technology Transfer; and

e) Institutional Linkages.

These five issues were recognized in the Forest Principles and Chapter 11 of Agenda 21 and were viewed by the organizers as the core of forest related concerns in most parts of the world.

The first meeting of the IWGGF discussed a wide range of forest concerns, from meeting basic human needs at local levels to a holistic approach to conservation, sustainable management, environment and trade issues at national and international levels. Through the active participation of all those who attended, the meeting in Kuala Lumpur was fruitful in contributing to the framework of actions on forests to be considered by UNCSD.

The participants recognized that there were other issues relating to forests that also required the attention of the international community and these should be addressed in processes leading up to the UNCSD Review on Forest Issues in 1995. Of the additional issues proposed at this meeting (Annex II) it was agreed that two issues (i) Participation and Transparency in Forest Management and (ii) Comprehensive, Cross-sectoral Integration, Including Land Use Planning and Management and the Influence of Policies External to the Traditional Forest Sector, will be deliberated at the Second Meeting of the IWGGF.

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Background papers on the issues discussed at the First IWGGF meeting, prepared to stimulate discussion, will be further developed by taking into account the wide range of views expressed and issues identified in order to define better these issues and their implications for national and international actions. At the Second Meeting of the IWGGF, to be held in Canada in October, 1994, the revised issue papers will be further reviewed and commented on by the participants so that a summary of these deliberations and conclusions reached can be presented for the consideration of the UNCSD in 1995.

The participants emphasized the pressing need for coordinated efforts to implement more effectively the Rio commitments on forests at the national and international levels. The participants stressed the urgency for adequate preparations for the discussions on forest issues to take place at the UNCSD session in 1995 and that accordingly, the High-level (Ministerial) segment of the May 1994 UNCSD session should:

- take note of the various initiatives being undertaken including those by various international organisations, in preparing substantively for the 1995 UNCSD session;

- encourage transparency of these various processes and their outcomes;

- define priorities for consideration and action at the UNCSD in 1995; and

- promote appropriate coordination and recognize the need for a broadly based preparatory process that would consider the inputs from these various initiatives;

The participants at the meeting wish to bring the IWGGF initiative to the attention of the UNCSD in May 1994 and note that it takes into account the other initiatives on forests. The IWGGF is aimed at:

a) facilitating preparations for international action toward realizing the commitments made at UNCED on forest issues, and

b) taking stock of the changing situation at national and international levels, which is useful to promoting practical international cooperation.

This initiative should help promote global partnership towards sustainable development and sustainable management of the world's forests and better protection of the Earth.

Kuala Lumpur,
MALAYSIA
21 April, 1994

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Appendix I

FIRST MEETING OF THE
INTERGOVERNMENTAL WORKING GROUP ON GLOBAL FORESTS
18 - 21 APRIL 1994
KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA

LIST OF PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES/ORGANISATIONS

1. CAMEROON
2. CANADA
3. CHILE
4. CHINA
5. FINLAND
6. GERMANY
7. GHANA
8. INDIA
9. INDONESIA
10. JAPAN
11. RUSSIA
12. SWEDEN
13. UNITED KINGDOM
14. UNITED STATES
15. MALAYSIA
16. COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (CSD)
17. FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANISATION (FAO)
18. INTERNATIONAL TROPICAL TIMBER ORGANISATION (ITTO)

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19. INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR THE CONSERVATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES (IUCN)

20. BUSINESS COUNCIL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (BCSD)

21. WORLDWIDE FUND FOR NATURE (WWF)

22. SIERRA CLUB

23. INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (IISD)

Appendix II

NON-PAPER ON SIGNIFICANT ISSUES NOT YET GIVEN DUE CONSIDERATION BY THE IWGGF

IWGGF has requested an enumeration of the key issues which, so far, have either been missed or inadequately addressed by the IWGGF process. An informal contact group has met to discuss this question, and input has been received from several delegations. The following topics were identified. It is recommended that, before adjournment of its first session, the IWGGF should decide how these issues will be addressed.

1 **EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION IN FOREST MANAGEMENT DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES BY ALL STAKEHOLDERS** [UNCED Forest Principles, 2(d), 5(b)]

2 **FULL PUBLIC ACCESS TO ESSENTIAL INFORMATION** [Forest Principles 2(c)]

3 **COMPREHENSIVE, CROSS-SECTORAL INTEGRATION, INCLUDING LAND USE PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT AND THE INFLUENCE OF POLICIES EXTERNAL TO THE TRADITIONAL FOREST SECTOR** [Forest Principles 3(c), 8(e), 9(c), 13(d), 13(e)]

4 **PROTECTION OF THE CUSTOMARY RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS AND OTHER FOREST-DEPENDENT PEOPLES** [Forest Principles 5(a)]

5 **EQUITABLE RESOLUTION OF LAND TENURE CONFLICTS** [Forest Principles 5(a)]

6 **USE OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT** [Forest Principles 8(h)]

7 **DEVELOPMENT OF METHODOLOGIES FOR THE COMPREHENSIVE VALUATION OF FOREST GOODS AND SERVICES** [Forest Principles 6(c)]

Another important procedural matter has been raised which concerns not only how the product of the IWGGF will be used, but whether the IWGGF or any other initiative will be productively incorporated into the UNCSD's review of forests:

* **HOW TO HARMONIZE THE SEVERAL, INTERNATIONAL FOREST-RELATED INITIATIVES LEADING INTO THE UNCSD's 1995 REVIEW OF FORESTS, SO THAT THEY ARE COMPLEMENTARY AND MUTUALLY SUPPORTING**